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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004502

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DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP, G, INL, DRL, EUR/PGI, EUR/SE
DEPARTMENT FOR INR/IC/TIPOFF, CA/VO/L/C

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SUBJECT: TIP IN TURKEY: TURKISH-AUSTRALIAN ANTI-TRAFFICKING
COOPERATION HITS SNAG

(U) Classified by Polcounselor John Kunstadter; reasons: 1.4
(b,d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. In November 2003, an Australian Coast Guard patrol intercepted an Indonesian smuggling vessel carrying 14 Turkish citizens. By July 2004, Australian Federal Police (AFP) agents had traced the human smuggling network organizers to Turkey, where smugglers and witnesses were engaged in a bidding war over evidence that could build the Australian Government's case against the network. A confidential AFP intel report (septel) details the

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investigation, highlights GOT efforts to cooperate on international smuggling and trafficking, and points to Canada, Germany, New Zealand and South Korea as additional target destinations for the smuggling network. Post will submit an unclassified list of suspected smugglers and accomplices through Visas Viper channel. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On November 4, 2003, an Australian Coast Guard patrol intercepted an Indonesian vessel carrying 14 Turkish citizens. Passengers aboard reportedly paid smugglers \$7500 each for illegal transit to Australia. AFP agents told Emboff they opened an investigation but before they could obtain statements against the smugglers, immigration authorities had deported the 14 passengers.

13. (C) According to the AFP agent in charge of the investigation, Shawn Selles, organizers of the smuggling network had delivered more than 250 Turkish and Kurdish illegal immigrants since 1993. The principal member of the network, Mehmet Seriban, was arrested in Australia in March 2004. Selles said he believes the remaining members of the network are in hiding near Gaziantep and Adiyaman, Turkey.

14. (C) With GOT permission, Selles and AFP agent Glenn Morrison arrived in Turkey in July 2004 to take the passengers' (now considered witnesses) statements and gather evidence for a request to extradite members of the smuggling network. Working through the Australian Embassy in Ankara and the Turkish MFA, Selles and Morrison arranged transportation, lodging, and per diem for the 14 witnesses to travel to Ankara from their homes also in Gaziantep and Adiyaman, Turkey to give their testimonies.

15. (C) Selles commented that, though the Turkish bureaucracy introduced unnecessary hurdles to the process, in the end, the GOT facilitated the interviews. Selles also commented that, at times, officials at the Turkish MFA and the Turkish MOI seemed to work directly against one another. "We were tenacious about gaining permissions from each of the agencies we were instructed to visit, that's why it took us 8 months to get to the point where we could finally interview the witnesses," he said. "There was a lot of confusion in the process."

16. (C) When the witnesses met Selles in Ankara in July 2004, they recanted on their promises to provide evidence against the smugglers, telling Selles they would only share their testimony and documentary evidence in exchange for \$10k USD each. The smugglers, they claimed, offered \$30k and a new Mercedes Benz each to keep silent, but the witnesses offered to settle with Selles for \$10k each. "They were afraid the smugglers wouldn't honor their pledge," he commented. When Selles explained he was legally prohibited from what he characterized as "bribing witnesses for testimony," the witnesses threatened to "lose" the documentary evidence.

17. (C) According to Selles, Turkish National Police (TNP)

later interviewed the witnesses and obtained the written testimonies, which he notes are inadmissible in Australian courts. "The TNP tried to help us, but for our courts to recognize the evidence, we need to be in control of the interview," he said. Selles refused to pay the witnesses and returned to Australia

empty-handed. POSTSCRIPT: Through their Ankara-based attorneys Sevda Ugur and Mustafa Agaoglu, the witnesses are now claiming pain, suffering, and the Australian Government's refusal to compensate them for their testimony as the basis for a lawsuit they have filed against Selles and the Australian Government.

EDELMAN